

PART IV

THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Farms - Number and Size

The number of farms in Ferry County has steadily decreased since 1920 when there were 730 units. The latest Census of Agriculture (1959) counted 283 farms in the county. This was 120 less than enumerated in 1954. However, the Census definition of a farm in 1959 was more restrictive than in 1954. In Ferry County, the decrease in the number of farms which resulted from the change in farm definition was 26, accounting for 21.7 percent of the 120 difference noted between the two Census years. In 1959, Ferry County ranked thirty-fifth in the state in the number of farms.

Although the number of farms has decreased since 1920, the trend in average size and in number of acres devoted to farmland in the county has been upward. Consolidation of farm units as well as the addition of new land has more than doubled the average size of Ferry County farms since World War II from 495 acres in 1945 to 1,053 acres in 1959. Land devoted to agriculture in Ferry County has increased from 15,767 acres in 1900 to nearly 300,000 acres in 1959. The overall increase during the 60 year period, however, has not been steady as farm acreage dropped in the 1920's as well as during World War II. In 1959, farmlands represented 21.2 percent of the total county area. Also, Ferry ranked twenty-second among the 39 counties of Washington in land in farms in 1959.

Table 8. Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Ferry County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in Farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	62	254	15,767	1.1
1910	590	171	101,050	7.2
1920	730	223	162,888	11.6
1925	602	236	142,557	10.1
1930	577	231	133,470	9.5
1940	553	454	251,437	17.9
1945	464	495	229,941	16.3
1950	433	581	251,684	17.9
1954	403	624	251,472	17.9
1959	283	1,053	298,247	21.2

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

In 1959, about 42 percent of the farms in Ferry County were over 500 acres each. Only 1.4 percent were under 10 acres. The decrease in number of farms between 1954 and 1959 occurred at all levels of operations from those under 10 acres to those over 500 acres. Farms under 10 acres numbered 18 in 1954 whereas only 4 were enumerated in 1959. This is indicative of the trend to consolidate the smaller, less efficient farms, particularly those under 10 acres, into larger units. It should also be noted that part of the decrease in the number of small farms resulted from the change in the 1959 Census definition of a farm.

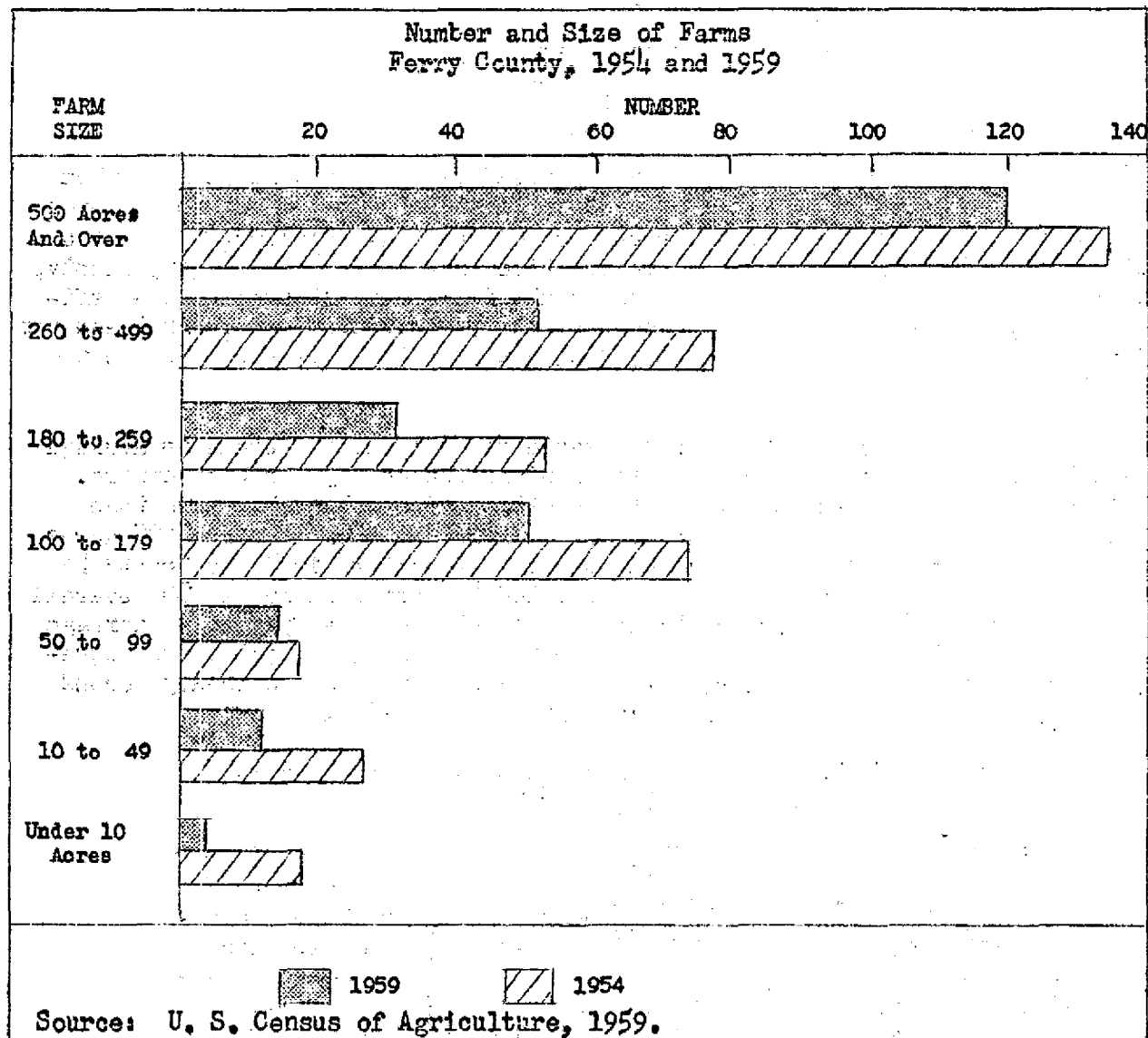


Figure 6. Number and Size of Ferry County Farms, 1954 and 1959.

Types of Farms

Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy dominate Ferry County agriculture. According to the Census of Agriculture, these numbered 121, accounting for nearly half of all Ferry County farms in 1959. In 1954, 174 livestock farms were counted which, in relation to the 1959 figure, represented a drop in number of 30 percent between these two Census years. Next in numbers in 1959 were those considered miscellaneous and unclassified farms which totaled 114. This category included farms raising forest products, horses, colts and ponies. Also included were all institutional farms and Indian Reservations. Other farm types which were very minor in number in 1959 included 6 general farms, 2 field crop farms and 1 dairy farm. The general category included those growing field seed crops, hay and silage and farms which received cash income from three or more sources and did not meet the criteria for any one type. There were no county farms specializing in vegetables, poultry, fruit or nuts in 1959.

Table 9. Types of Farms, Ferry County, 1959

Type of Farms	Estimated Number of Farms 1/	Percent of all farms in the County	
		1954	1959
Total farms in county	244	100.0	100.0
Field crop farms	2	--	.8
Cash-grain	2	8.8	.8
Other field-crop	--	--	--
Vegetable farms	--	--	--
Fruit-and-nut farms	--	--	--
Poultry farms	--	1.2	--
Dairy farms	1	7.7	.4
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	121	43.2	49.6
General farms	6	6.6	2.5
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	114	32.5	46.7

1/ The data are estimates made for all farms upon the basis of tabulation of data for a sample of approximately one-fifth of all farms. These estimates are subject to sampling errors and will not agree exactly with totals obtained by the tabulation of data for all farms.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Residence and Operation

Ferry County agriculture is characterized by a large proportion of operators residing on farms and dividing their labor between agriculture and off-farm work. Farmers find local seasonal employment mainly in the forest industry. Other jobs are available in mines and at times in construction work. In 1959, about 65 percent of the farm operators reported having worked off their farms. Almost 46 percent worked off their farms more than 100 days. On an income basis, 55 percent of the farm operators and their families gained more cash income from off-farm work than they received from farm products marketed from their own farms during the year.

The majority of Ferry County farmers live on the farms they operate. Farmers living on the farms under their operation numbered 259 in 1959. Only 67 farmers reported not residing on farm operated.

Farmland Utilization

About 41 percent of the 298,247 acres of farmland in Ferry County was used only for pasture or grazing in 1959. This included noncrop, open or brush pasture and cut-over or deforested land that had been improved and used for pasture but excluded woodland and cropland used for pasture. Woodland pastured was the second largest agricultural acreage amounting to 111,221 acres or about 37 percent of the total county land in farms. Woodlands not pastured occupied about 8.7 percent of the total farm area in 1959 by adding up to 25,974 acres. Over 200 farms reported woodland pasture while those with farm woodland not pastured numbered 77. Cropland harvested amounted to 19,519 acres in 1959 which represented 6.5 percent of the total farmland. Summerfallow and idle cropland covered 7,916 acres or 2.6

percent of the land in farms in 1959. About 2.3 percent of the 1959 county farmland was in cropland used for pasture only which totaled 6,824 acres during that year. Finally, 2,903 or 1.0 percent of the farm acres were in home lots, roads, and wasteland.

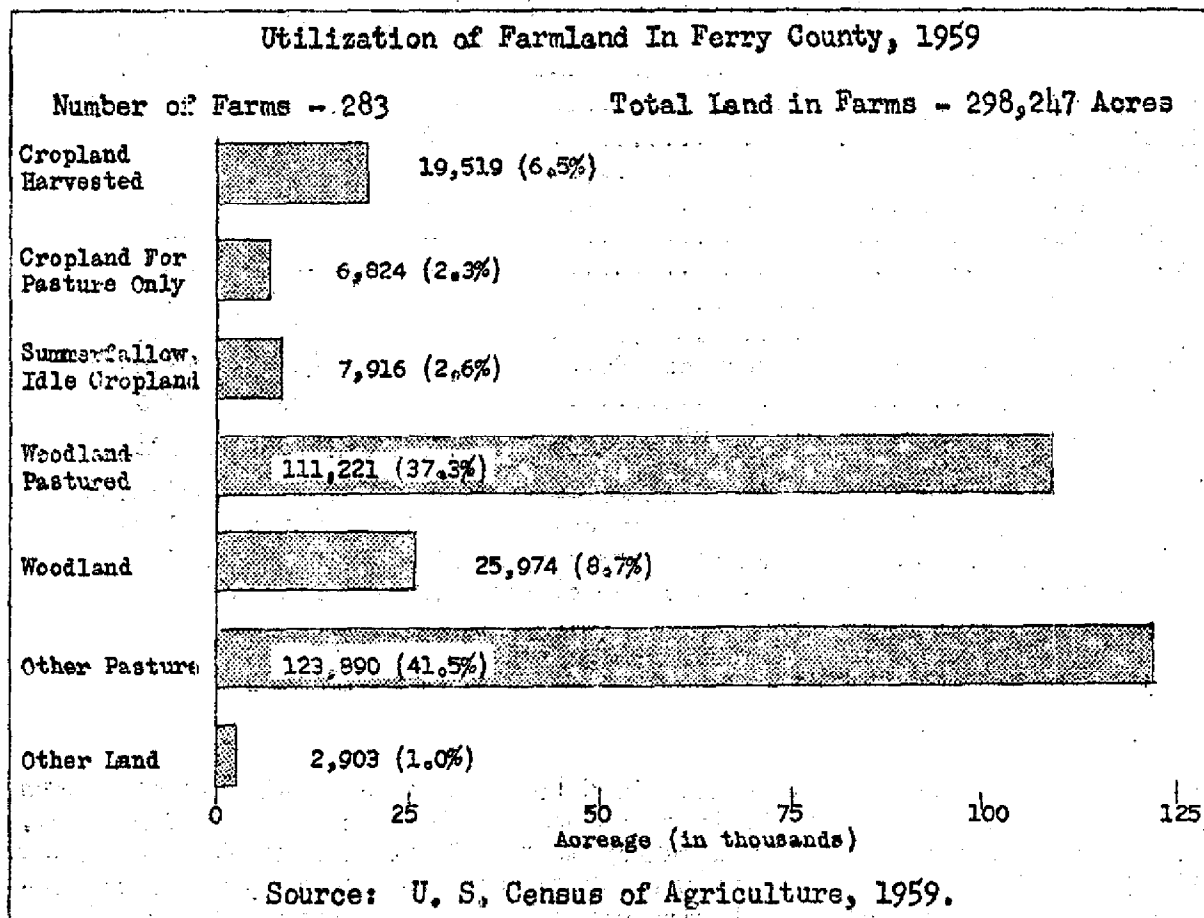


Figure 7. Utilization of Farmland in Ferry County, 1959.

Table 10. Value of Farm Land and Buildings
Ferry County, 1900-1959

Year	County Average Values	
	Per Farm	Per Acre
1900	\$ 2,306	\$17
1910	2,285	25
1920	4,390	20
1930	3,435	15
1940	3,913	9
1950	11,173	20
1954	14,944	23
1959	27,795	24

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Values

The value of farmlands and buildings in Ferry County has greatly increased since 1900. After reaching a high around 1920, valuations decreased during the depression years of the 1930's. After 1940, average value of land and buildings per farm increased more than sevenfold, going from about \$3,913 to \$27,795 in 1959. Average value land and buildings per farm acre during the same twenty year period rose from \$9 to about \$24. The increase has resulted from the general rise of real estate values in Washington accompanied by investments in new buildings, land clearing and farm improvements.

Farm Tenure

Most farms in Ferry County are operated either on a full-owner or part-owner basis and tenant and manager operated farms are not common. Full owner farms in 1959 constituted 48.8 percent of all county farms and contained 16.8 percent of the farmland. The number of full-owner farms has been on the decline since the 1930's. In contrast, part-owner operations have become more popular in Ferry County agriculture. On this type of operation, a portion of a farm is rented on a share-crop or share-profit basis. Part-owners accounted for 42.7 percent of all farms in 1959 and they operated about three-fourths of the farmland.

Tenancy--the renting and leasing of entire farms--has generally declined in recent years. In 1959, the Census counted 23 farms operated on a tenant basis which accounted for only 5.4 percent of the county farmland acreage. During the same year, only one farm was operated by a manager--an individual who manages land for others and is paid a wage or salary for his services.

Table 11. Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
by Tenure of Operator, Ferry County, 1925-1959

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	602	445	74.0	85	14.1	2	.3	70	11.6
1930	577	451	78.2	55	9.5	4	.7	67	11.6
1935	647	446	68.9	61	9.4	1	.2	139	21.5
1940	553	369	66.7	76	13.7	1	.2	50	9.0
1945	464	239	51.5	144	31.0	0	0	107	23.1
1950	433	251	58.0	133	30.7	1	.2	48	11.1
1954	403	194	48.1	147	36.5	2	.5	60	14.9
1959	283	138	48.8	121	42.7	1	.4	23	8.1

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

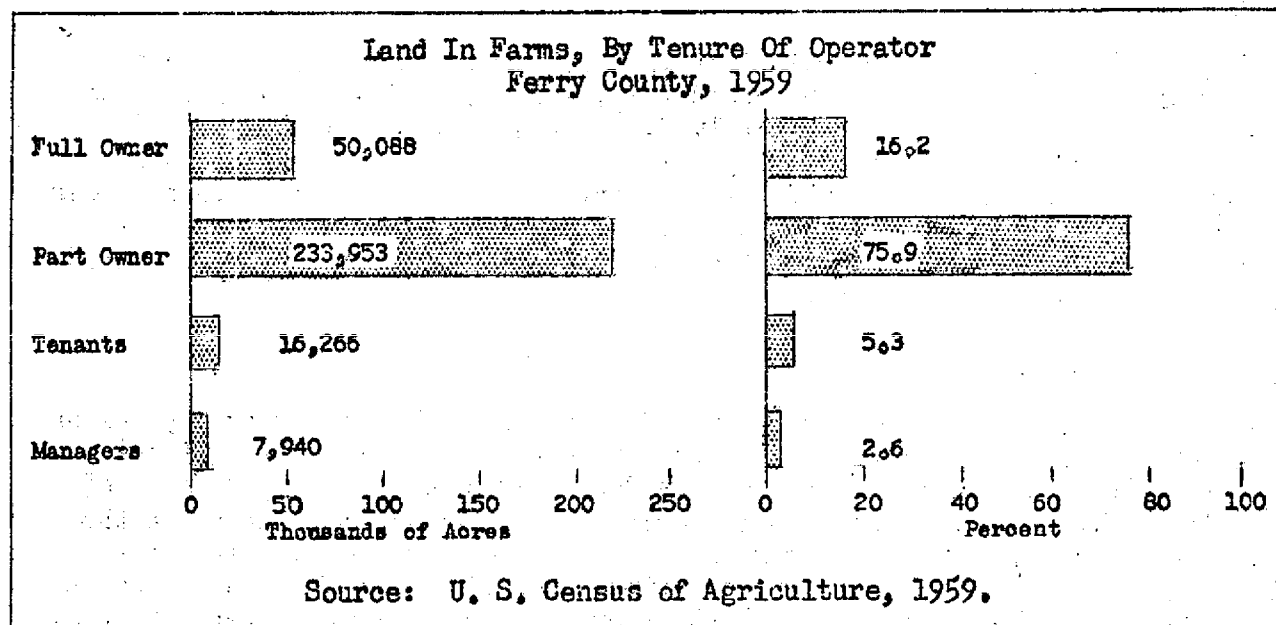


Figure 8. Land in Farms, By Tenure of Operator, Ferry County, 1959.

Irrigation

Irrigation has come to play a more important role in Ferry County agriculture in recent years although it is still on a limited scale. According to the Census of Agriculture, 1,389 acres were under irrigation in 1950 compared with 2,809 acres in 1954 and 2,598 acres in 1959. In 1959, the irrigated acreage represented nearly one percent of the county's total farmland. With a dry period during the summer, irrigation becomes a valuable asset to feed crop growers and livestockmen.

Farms which reported having at least some irrigated land in 1959 numbered 56, about 20 percent of all farms in Ferry County. Crops were harvested from 2,474 acres of irrigated land on 53 farms during the year. The largest irrigated acreage in 1959 was devoted to alfalfa hay. Other hays and small grain crops made up most of the irrigated croplands other than those in alfalfa.

Table 12. Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Ferry County, 1950, 1954 and 1959

Item	1959	1954	1950
Number of irrigated farms	56	72	60
Land irrigated (acres)	2,598	2,809	1,389
Irrigated land in farms according to use:			
Farms irrigating crops	53	70	58
Acres of crops irrigated	2,474	2,697	1,344
Acres of other land irrigated	124	112	45

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Most of the county's irrigation is accomplished by sprinkler systems with the water coming from surface sources located on the farms. Others utilize water from wells on the farm.

Farm Facilities

The capacity of the farmer to produce is significantly related to the items of farm equipment and facilities at his disposal. Tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are found on majority of Ferry County farms. In 1959, about 82 percent of the farms reported a total of 346 tractors. The number of farms with automobiles represented over 71 percent of the total farms. Over 81 percent of the farms also had motor trucks in 1959. The importance of livestock and feed crops in the county is indicated by the relatively high frequency of hay and grain harvesting machinery among the local farmers. Over 35 percent of the farms had pick-up balers while nearly 31 percent had grain combines in 1959.

In recent years, there has been a great increase in the number of Ferry County farms which enjoy the modern conveniences of telephones, home freezers and other facilities. Farms with telephones numbered only 24 in 1954 compared with 104 in 1959. Those with home freezers also increased in number during the same period from 131 to 141.

Table 13. Specified Equipment and Facilities on Farms
Ferry County, 1959

Facility or Equipment Item	Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone	104	42.6
Home freezer	141	57.8
Milking machine	8	3.3
Electric milk cooler	2	.1
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower ...	38	15.6
Grain combines	75	30.7
Pick-up baler	87	35.6
Field forage harvester .	11	4.5
Motortrucks	198	81.1
Tractors	201	82.4
Crawler tractors	33	13.5
Automobiles	174	71.3

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.

Farm Roads

Much progress has been made in providing all-weather roads for farm families in Ferry County. In 1959, about 30 percent of the county farms were located on hard-surfaced roads. Nearly 36 percent of the farms were on improved roads (gravel, shell or shale) and the remaining (34 percent) were on dirt roads in the same year. About 62 percent of those farms which required traveling on dirt roads in order to reach them were within 5 miles of a hard-surfaced road.

Table 14. Numbers of Farms, Land in Farms and Cropland Harvested, by Size of Farm, Ferry County, 1959

Size of Farm	Number of Farms	Land in Farms (acres)	Cropland Harvested (acres)
Under 10 acres	4	17	8
10 to 49 acres	12	319	90
50 to 69 acres	3	171	94
70 to 99 acres	11	930	184
100 to 139 acres	28	3,277	716
140 to 179 acres	23	3,541	743
180 to 219 acres	16	3,147	562
220 to 259 acres	15	3,540	922
260 to 499 acres	51	18,871	2,658
500 to 999 acres	47	34,248	3,521
1,000 or more acres	<u>73</u>	<u>230,186</u>	<u>10,121</u>
Total	283	298,247	19,519

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.